



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

March 2018 Newsletter



South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick prepares to go retrieve a captured doe mule deer south of Big Piney.

Wyoming Range Deer Project

The Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and Wyoming Game and Fish Department, along with many other volunteers, conducted another mule deer capture in the Big Piney area. The research was initiated during the winter of 2012-2013. The overarching goal of the project is to investigate the nutritional relationships between mule deer populations, energy development, habitat conditions, and climate.

The first helicopter capture occurred in March 2013 with the capture of 70 adult females, 35 in the northern (Big Piney/La Barge) and 35 in the southern (Kemmerer/Evanston) winter ranges. Each deer has been fitted with a GPS collar to be worn for two years. An Ultrasound is also performed on each deer to determine percent body fat and pregnancy. Animals are recaptured each December and March to evaluate change in body condition between seasons. Predictably, with the milder winter, deer are showing much higher fat levels compared to last year.

Additionally, the deer are monitored each autumn to determine fawn production and survival. Productivity of individual animals combined with their body condition and forage production data will be used to determine the habitat's "nutritional carrying capacity." Ultimately, this information will allow wildlife managers to assess whether the Wyoming Range deer herd is reaching its reproductive capacity based on current available habitat. This research addresses primary components outlined in the WY Range Mule Deer Initiative.



Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause fastens a new GPS collar on a mule deer doe near Big Piney recently.



Dr. Kevin Monteith uses ultrasound to measure a deer's body fat.



A doe deer is released with her two fawns after being collared.



Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

March 2018

Counting the Herds

Winter is typically the time when wildlife managers conduct their big game counts because animals are concentrated on their winter ranges. This makes it easier for wildlife managers to get a good count on the herds, which can be quite large. Counts are conducted from both the ground and the air. Managers not only count the total number of animals, but also classify them as males, females and young of the year.

With the unusually mild winter, especially at the lower elevations, many of the **elk** feedgrounds in the Pinedale and Jackson regions are showing lower numbers of elk with many animals choosing to winter out on available native winter range.

Managers know that more elk are wintering away from feedgrounds, but these animals can be hard to find, even from the air. Bottom line, with a low-average harvest from last fall, managers believe there are still about the same number of elk on the landscape as last year and proposed seasons will be very similar to last year.



Wildlife managers estimate the Sublette **Mule Deer** Herd suffered a 30-40 percent decline during last year's hard winter. Unfortunately, the effects of a hard winter often carry over into the next year as was seen by this winter's low fawn count. The doe deer that survived last winter came out in very poor body condition, and consequently, many were unable to have a fawn that survived. The fawn ratio for the Sublette Herd was just 49 per 100 does. Managers would like to see that number in the 70s. Fortunately, this winter has been mild, giving those animals still on the landscape a break. And with good snowpack in the mountains, managers are hoping for good shrub production, which is just what deer herds desperately need to successfully raise fawns and bring numbers back up.



The impacts of last year's hard winter on **pronghorn** pretty much mirror the effects seen on mule deer. The number of pronghorn in the Sublette Herd is still at about 25 percent below the desired population and similar to deer, the number of fawns seen this winter was down as well. Therefore, proposed hunting seasons for both deer and pronghorn will continue to be very conservative in an effort to raise numbers.

As with elk, managers typically count more **moose** in a heavy snow year because more animals get forced to lower elevations and are more visible. Consequently, this winter's count for moose was down from last winter's, but likely because more animals were in the timber this winter and managers believe there are about the same number of moose out there as last year.

Wildlife managers are concerned over the continued declines in the Whiskey Basin Bighorn Sheep Herd. While most of the herd falls on the west side of the Winds in the Lander Region, the Pinedale Region does manage a portion of the herd (Hunt Area 8) and are seeing similar low numbers of lambs and overall numbers. Consequently, managers are proposing a reduction of two licenses in HA 8 for next fall.





Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

March 2018



Fish On!

Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea reports continued good ice fishing as of late in the Pinedale area, as evidenced by this happy angler hoisting a nice lake trout pulled out Fremont Lake recently.

Anglers are encouraged to pay attention to ice conditions, and check with the Pinedale Game & Fish office before heading out, especially as we move into spring.

FIVE ICE TIPS

1. CHECK THICKNESS

Contact a local bait shop or sporting goods store to ask about ice conditions and then check once you get there. The rough guidelines for clear, new solid ice are:

- 2 inches – Stay off
- 4 inches – OK for ice fishing or other activities on foot
- Check the thickness of the ice every 100 to 150 feet.
- Never take any vehicles, snowmobiles or ATVs onto the ice.

2. BE SURE IT'S SAFE

- Avoid pressure ridges in the ice and large cracks that can emerge in a lake
- Clear ice is stronger than white ice, which has frozen, thawed and refrozen and is not always stable
- White ice can also be from air bubbles or frozen snow and is much weaker than clear ice. For white ice, double the recommended thickness.

3. REMEMBER

No matter your preparation and ice conditions, ice should never be considered 100 percent safe. Be prepared and cautious at all times.

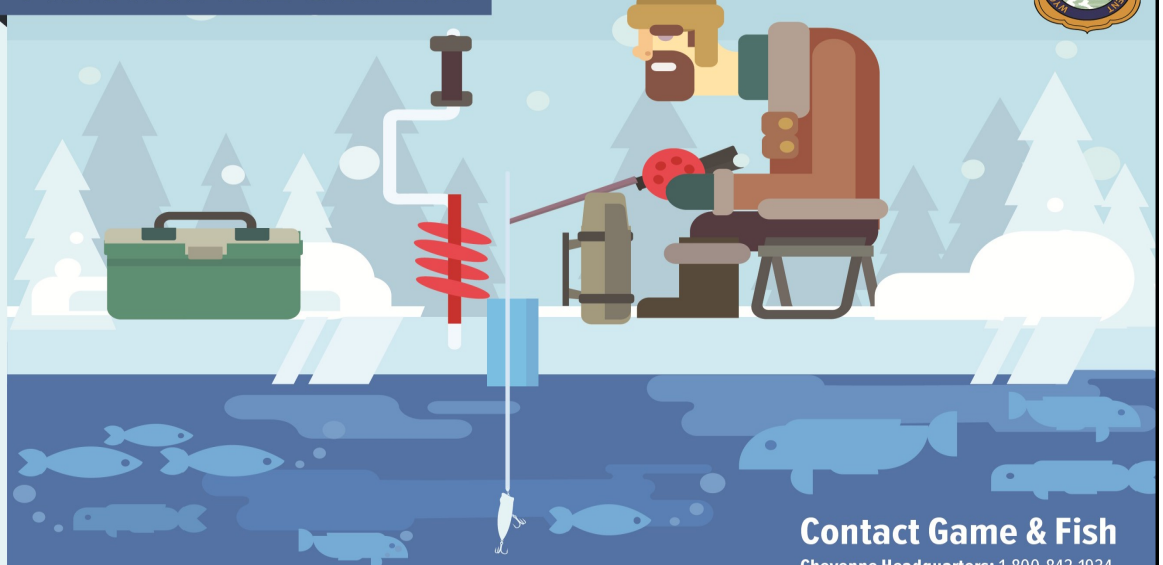
4. BUDDY SYSTEM

Anglers should never fish alone. Always fish with someone else and be certain to let a friend know where you are going.

5. STAY WARM

To prevent hypothermia if an ice fishing accident does occur, pack an extra set of clothes and hot liquids.

PRACTICE ICE SAFETY



What else should I know?

Fluctuating water levels in reservoirs and wind impact ice conditions and can create dangerous ice conditions. Be aware of recent weather conditions and temperatures and scout out the lake you wish to fish for overflow, wet areas, and open water. With variable ice conditions across the state and rapidly changing conditions, anglers are urged to call their regional office to inquire about ice conditions.

Game and Fish discourages driving any motorized vehicle on a frozen lake as well as ice fishing on rivers and or other

moving water that has frozen over. Remember to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device and carry ice safety picks. Ice cleats are also a good idea. Keep a throw rope handy in case someone falls in.

Anglers venturing on fishing trips this winter should also keep in mind the Fishing Regulations and the Special Winter Ice Fishing Provisions, available on the Game and Fish website at wgfd.wyo.gov, regional offices and Cheyenne Headquarters.



Contact Game & Fish

Cheyenne Headquarters: 1-800-842-1934

Casper Regional Office: 1-800-233-8544

Cody Regional Office: 1-800-654-1178

Green River Regional Office: 1-800-843-8096

Jackson Regional Office: 1-800-423-4113

Lander Regional Office: 1-800-654-7862

Laramie Regional Office: 1-800-843-2352

Pinedale Regional Office: 1-800-452-9107

Sheridan Regional Office: 1-800-331-9834



Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

March 2018



From the Front Desk

The Pinedale Region is sorry to report that office manager Kristen Draney has decided to push on to new adventures. Kristen has been a great asset to the regional office, cheerfully providing information to hunters and anglers at the front desk for the last two years. She has decided to pursue her personal interest in creating a variety of crafts. However, we are happy to report that Kristen and her family will be staying in the Pinedale area. We wish her all the best!

Wyoming Range Deer Surveyed

Personnel in the Green River, Pinedale and Jackson Regions of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department conducted extensive aerial surveys for two weeks in February to get a more accurate count of mule deer in the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd. The surveys were completed by two helicopters flying over the foothills and deer winter ranges on the east side of the Wyoming Range, winter range complexes north and southwest of Kemmerer and along the west side of the Salt River Range in Star Valley. The flights were conducted from February 5 - 14, with a total of 133 hours flown. Wildlife managers actually saw 25,317 deer and with the sightability model adjustment



the estimate was approximately 29,000 deer. While this is well below to 40,000 population objective for the herd, it was actually about what biologists were expecting to see given the significant number of deer that were lost due to the hard winter last year. Wildlife managers will again be proposing very conservative hunting seasons for next fall to try and get numbers back toward the desired population objective.



Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

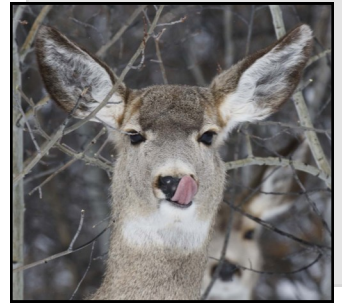
March 2018



A BLM fire crew conducts a prescribed burn on mule deer winter range southwest of Daniel last summer.

Big Piney Students Helping Mule Deer

Pinedale Habitat Biologist Phil Damm, is enlisting the help of Big Piney High School students to improve mule deer winter range southwest of Daniel. Damm is using a combination of prescribed fire followed by shrub plantings to increase the diversity and productivity of the mule deer forage on the landscape. Last summer, Damm teamed up with local Bureau of Land Management personnel to conduct a prescribed burn on deer winter range dominated by mountain big sage that had been over-browsed for years and was lacking in produc-



tivity. As is often the case, a flush of new grasses and forbs sprouted up soon after the fire, benefitting sage grouse and other wildlife. Then Phil rounded up a crew from Big Piney High School to help him plant serviceberry and chokecherry shrubs, both preferred food for mule deer. Supplemental shrub plantings on the relatively small, but crucial winter range, will provide high quality winter forage to help carry deer through hard winters. To date, over 4,200 shrubs have been planted.



(Left) Pinedale Habitat Biologist Phil Damm shows a group of Big Piney High School students how to plant shrubs. (Lower left) Shrubs are planted and protected with plastic tubes to increase growth rates and protect them from early overbrowsing. (Right) a newly planted chokecherry. (Below right) A serviceberry browsed by a mule deer.





Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

March 2018

THE ULTIMATE HUNTING ADVENTURE

WYOMING'S SUPER TAG RAFFLE OFFERS 10 SPECIES AND 11 CHANCES TO WIN



Deadline to apply is July 2, 2018

Raffle winners must purchase any applicable licenses and/or stamps before hunting.

Super Tag tickets: \$10

Super Tag Triecta tickets: \$30

**ENTER
NOW**



2017 SUPER TAG
TRIFECTA WINNER
ZACK DEBERARD

Don't Forget to Apply for the Wyoming Super Tag

In 2017, the raffle raised \$820,130 for wildlife conservation in Wyoming! A total of 13,646 individuals participated in the raffle purchas-

ing 62,551 Super Tag tickets. This represents a 16% increase in individual participation and an 18% increase in ticket sales from 2016. The Department is again offering the "Ultimate Hunting Gear Raffle" as an incentive to purchase more tickets. Individuals are entered into this raffle each time they purchase 5 or more

Cheatgrass Education and Research Update

When: Tuesday April 3rd, 10:30am-2:30pm

Where: Sublette County Weed and Pest

12 South Bench Rd.

Pinedale, WY 82941

Who: Anyone interested in learning more about local cheatgrass control efforts and emerging research


Free Lunch Provided if You RSVP!

RSVP to Glenn at gowings@uwyo.edu or 307-367-4380 by 3/29,
no RSVP required to attend if you're not eating

Invited Speakers:

- Julie Kraft, Sublette County Weed and Pest
- Clay Wood, University of Wyoming
- Dr. Dan Tekiela, University of Wyoming Extension
- Shannon Clark, Colorado State University



 UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
EXTENSION

